

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 MC-02

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R 300931Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0901

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

C O N F I D E N T I A L OUAGADOUGOU 0295

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PFOR, XA, UV

SUBJ: REGIONAL ARMS RESTRAINTS STUDY

RER: STATE 020621

ABIDJAN FOR DEFENSE ATTACHE

1. SINCE INDEPENDENCE AND UNTIL DECEMBER 1974 UPPER VOLTA SHOWED CONSIDERABLE RESTRAINT IN ITS ACQUISITION OF ARMS AND IN THE MAINTENANCE OF ITS ARMY, THIS IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT A MILITARY REGIME HAS BEEN IN POWER IN OUAGADOUGOU SINCE 1966. THE VOLTAN ARMY NUMBERED NO MORE THAN 2000 MEN, POORLY ARMED AND POORLY TRAINED AND ITS ARMS SUPPLIER WAS EXCLUSIVELY FRANCE. THE REASON FOR THIS RESTRAINT WAS MAINLY FINANCIAL. UPPER VOLTA IS A VERY POOR COUNTRY AND ITS LEADERS WERE DETERMINED TO USE THE COUNTRY'S MEAGER RESOURCES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

2. THE BORDER DISPUTE BETWEEN MALI AND UPPER VOLTA, WHICH LED TO SERIOUS INCIDENTS IN DECEMBER 1974, REVEALED THE WEAKNESS OF THE VOLTAN ARMY IN THE FACE OF MUCH LARGER AND BETTER EQUIPPED MALIAN FORCES.

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THE RESULTING NATIONAL HUMILIATION LED THE GOUV TO

INCREASE THE SIZE OF THE ARMY TO 6000 MEN AND TO PURCHASE
LARGE QUANTITIES OF ARMS MOSTLY IN FRANCE AND OTHER
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THESE
RECENT ARMS PURCHASES INCLUDED SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS
SUCH AS SUPERSONIC JETS, MISSILES AND MODERN TANKS.
IN FACT, GIVEN THE DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED BY THE
VOLTAN ARMY IN MAINTAINING THE RELATIVELY SIMPLE
EQUIPMENT IT NOW HAS, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE GOUV,
UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT LAMIZANA, WOULD
WISH TO ACQUIRE SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS EVEN IF THEY
WERE FREE. WE ASSUME THAT UPPER VOLTA HAS NOW
ACQUIRED ALL THE ARMS IT WILL NEED FOR SOMETIME TO COME.

3. IF THE BORDER DISPUTE WITH MALI REMAINS QUIESCENT,
AS IS THE CASE AT PRESENT, WE WOULD NOT EXCLUDE THE
POSSIBILITY THAT PRESIDENT LAMIZANA MIGHT EVENTUALLY
WELCOME AN INITIATIVE DESIGNED TO BRING ABOUT A MUTUAL
REDUCTION OF FORCES BETWEEN MALI AND UPPER VOLTA. IT
IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE, HOWEVER, THAT THE UNITED STATES
COULD PLAY A USEFUL ROLE IN THIS CONTEXT. IT WOULD
SEEM MORE LOGICAL THAT SUCH INITIATIVE SHOULD
COME FROM THE OAU WHICH IS ALREADY INVOLVED IN
MEDIATING THE BORDER DISPUTE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

4. WE WISH TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE TENTATIVE
ASSESSMENT CONTAINED IN THE PRECEDING PARAGRAPHS
APPLIES TO THE PRESENT MILITARY LEADERSHIP WHICH IS
MODERATE AND REASONABLE BY WESTERN STANDARDS AND RELATIVELY
FREE OF CONSIDERATIONS OF GRANDEUR AND PRESTIGE.
THIS SITUATION COULD CHANGE DRASTICALLY, IF AS IS
WIDELY RUMORED, PRESIDENT LAMIZANA DECIDES
TO RETIRE THIS YEAR. HIS SUCCESSOR, WHETHER
MILITARY OR CIVILIAN, MIGHT NOT BE AS REASONABLE.
GRAHAM

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Message Attributes

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